

THANKSGIVING 1621 to 1908

BY EMORY HARRING DUNLAP



LANDING FROM THE
MAY FLOWER AT PLYMOUTH ROCK



THANKSGIVING and its story is one of the best known and cherished of the American institutions and lore. It never grows old. The little children still thrill at the recital of the bravery of the Plymouth colony. They exult in the prowess of Miles Standish and his brave boy soldiers and they weep over the hardships that the little boys and girls endured exiled in a foreign land. They laugh in merry glee at the first Thanksgiving dinner with its Indian guests. Young people all love the sweet story of Priscilla, the Puritan maiden. Men and women turning a moment in busy lives to glance backward feel a deep satisfaction in the knowledge of the bravery of their fathers who laid the foundations of the nation and who left them a heritage of sturdy courage and democratic ideals.

The traditions of a country never grow old. They have a perennial youth. Stories and traditions become embodied in the epochs of a nation's life and literature from which the latter generations find sustenance. The tales of the brave men of a country, of their sacrifices, and noble deeds of courage, of loyalty and of strength, come to be a part of the nation's thought and its life. They form ideals toward which the character of the community grows and develops. The story of Thanksgiving is a simple one from many viewpoints; but it is so rich in substance that its inspiration is felt to-day all over the United States.

In England the Puritans were unhappy. They separated from the Church of England and held services in private houses or in the open air. These were called Separatists. They were arrested as law-breakers, and fined or imprisoned. About the time the Jamestown colony was planted, a band of these Separatists went to Leyden, in Holland, where they could enjoy freedom of worship. They stayed there 12 years.

These Pilgrims were mainly farmers, and had difficulty to earn their living in the Dutch cities or gardens. Their children were obliged to attend Dutch schools, and were fast losing the use of the English tongue. The sons of the Pilgrims entered the Dutch army and navy, and the young people began to intermarry. The Pilgrims feared that if they stayed in Holland any longer, their families would become Dutch. They decided that they would like to go to America. They sent two men to get permission of the London company to settle on its land. The company was glad to get them for colonists, and gave them a charter of privileges.

The race spirit had cried against its loss by absorption. The sturdy English men desired to keep intact their language and their racial characteristics and worship God as they deemed right.

It was in December that they made a landing on the coast of Massachusetts.

There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim band—
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod;
They left unstain'd what there they found—
Freedom to worship God.

It was a terrible winter they lived through unused to the climate away from the comforts of civilization.

Better times came. The summer was a fruitful one and autumn saw the little colony with stores that would keep them through the coming winter. The barbarous foes of the west had not molested them, although they lived there, a tiny colony, shut in from friends by the vast sea to the east and the forest primeval stretching to the north, west and south of them. They were thankful for their blessings and so set aside a day in which to express their gratitude to the Good All Father. They were not rich in worldly goods, but their hearts reached out to all humanity, and so on that feast day they invited to their table Massasoit, an Indian chief, and 40 of his braves. It was a great undertaking for that small group, yet they gave from their hearts in the fullness of their gratitude. This sweet and wholesome spirit has become a part of the national celebration. Thanksgiving is a day of festivity, of family reunion, of feasting and of gladness.

An atmosphere of satisfaction pervades it. The analytical mind can but make comparisons of to-day and yesterday, and speculate on the morrow. That mind sees how the great catastrophes that fell upon the nation have

passed by. It sees the onward trend of all things. It sees that for every hardship there is an alleviating condition, and so courage is taken afresh. This same mind counts its blessings and turns to the less fortunate.

There is no doubt regarding the satisfaction the Pilgrim fathers had in entertaining their Indian guests. They were expressing their gratitude by helping others and making other lives brighter. This spirit is the patron saint of Thanksgiving.

Many people feel that their mite is small. It counts for little compared with the needs! That is true, no doubt. But calculate the mites of the city of Milwaukee, and imagine the joy of the unfortunate. The Associated Charities knows of many families where a Thanksgiving dinner would bring joy to the hearts of little children, and 'hope to the sick. The mites would count there. One dinner will make

a family happy and that organization knows of many places where there can be no Thanksgiving dinner, without the contributions of the open-hearted and those imbued with the spirit of the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving. Not far from Milwaukee are the sick poor, unfortunate men and women, through no fault of their own in many cases,

who are ill and suffering, cared for by the county. A donation of fruit or delicacies, of magazines, or of flowers to brighten their sad lives, would not leave the donor poorer, but would bring into some life a sweetness of restored confidence in humanity.

Not far away are the orphan asylums, where little



GOING TO CHURCH
HAD COMPLICATIONS



THE FIRST
INDIAN VISITOR TO
PLYMOUTH

children bereft of parents still love all of those things that a father's or mother's thoughtfulness bestows, but which must sometimes be denied in an institution where there are many needs to be filled.

The old men and women at the Little Sisters of the Poor, Home for the Aged, appreciate the diversion of Thanksgiving day in their days of life's decline. The day can be made brighter for them, too, if the people of Milwaukee are thoughtful. The list is a long one where the mites may be sent and where they will help to make lives a little brighter. There is the Catholic Boys' home, the Home for the Friendless, the Lutheran Home for the Feeble-minded, the Milwaukee House of Mercy, the Wisconsin Home and Farm School, the Flower Mission, the Rescue Mission, the Children's Free hospital, the Women's hospital, Aid society, and others. Each family knows of some other family for whom the day can be made happier.

How much small things count is exemplified by an episode that took place in a poorer part of the city recently. It was told by a little girl. She leaned against

her teacher's knee and said naively: "You know, teacher, that the man that lives down our alley was arrested. He had a little girl like me. They took him away and he can't come home for a long time and bring them any money. That little girl she did not have any dress, only a torn one with big holes in it, and she would get cold through the holes. I had two dresses. So my mother she gave one of them to that little girl so she could go to school, because it is so cold at home. Nights, after I go to bed, my mother she washes out my dress so it will be clean the next day."

The spirit of Thanksgiving that has come to us from our ancestors of old Plymouth has permeated through our national life and is so well and so beautifully manifested in the episode of the poor woman and her mite.

The influence of that first Thanksgiving has spread over the land and here in Milwaukee it will be manifested by a generous outpouring from the grateful hearts. Do not hesitate because you have so little to give. That little may mean much to him who has nothing, and think of the accumulation of little. Let us be worthy of the institution of our fathers.

ISLES OF THE BLEST.

Western Ireland has been excited over a particularly clear mirage seen near Ballyconnelly, a town on the wild Connemara coast.

The spectacle of a beautifully situated small town, with buildings of different sizes and varying styles of architecture, was seen rising out of the sea apparently about six or seven miles westward. Hundreds gathered to witness the sight, which was visible from three until six p. m., when it gradually vanished.

Many old legends of Irish folklore speak of a mystic land far away in the western ocean, variously known as Tirnanog, Hoy-Brazil, Moy Mell and the Land of the Ever Young.

In the book of the Dun Cow, preserved in the Royal Irish academy in Dublin—a volume more than 1,000 years old—the story is told how Prince Connla of the Golden Hair, son of King Conn of the Hundred Battles, was carried off by fairies to the Isles of the Blest.

Standing on the shore with his nobles and his royal father, Prince Connla saw a boat of shining crystal moving toward him. When the glittering vessel touched the shore, a fairy, like a human being, richly dressed, came forth, and addressing Connla endeavored to entice him to accompany her.

At last the fairy chanted a few stanzas like the Lorelei of German legend. Bewitched by her sweet voice, Prince Connla stepped into the magic boat, and, carried from sight in an instant, was never seen again in his native land.—New York Sun.

THANKSGIVING SPIRIT

By HELEN BRUGE WALLAGE

WHAT is the Thanksgiving spirit we bring to our holiday?

We know what it was in the good old days when savages lurked and famine stalked for the undoing of men and women who, tucked away in crevices among the ancestral cradles, candlesticks and tankards that cumbered the Mayflower, were finally dumped on an inhospitable shore.

We know what it is aimed to be.

But what in reality it is, this spirit that is supposed to run rampant on the last Thursday of November?

How many Americans even remember the origin of the holiday and the purpose to which it was dedicated, much less even sum up their blessings, individual and national?

We've had merry Thanksgivings given over to pumpkin pie, turkey and catching up broken or stretched family ties; we've had frivolous Thanksgivings when we have shouted ourselves hoarse and run the risk of pneumonia for our favorite football hero, or have laughed and cried with the rest of the holiday keeping matinee throng; we've had sad Thanksgivings when loneliness has caught us in her grip and the memories of brighter days have seared our quivering hearts; but who of us has had a thankful Thanksgiving?

Not many of us, if we would be honest enough to confess it.

Yet why not? It is what the day is for—to take stock of our blessings and give credit for them.

Who of us is so down in our luck as to be blessingless? Surely in 365 long days there have been a few when something good has come our way.

If there have been then it is only good manners, if nothing else, to make acknowledgment of them.

of our misfortunes. We multiply with lightning rapidity the times our friends have failed us, our business has come a cropper, or our health has gone to the bad.

An hour of toothache makes more impression than a year without the dentist; one stock that drops will cause more agony of mind than a twelvemonth of inflation gives pleasure; a slight will wrangle where a kindness is forgotten.

We can see how they, poor hungry, half-frozen terror-stricken Puritans had much to be thankful for; but if they had the Indian, we have the railroad to mutilate us.

If we haven't found any causes for Thanksgiving heretofore, it is for the good of our souls to make a systematic hunt. Rest assured it will not be unavailing.

It will make new women of us if we once learn to reckon our mercies. There is no greater sweetener of the disposition and smoother of the tangles of life, than to think on the things we have to make us happy.

If we would grow into sour, disgruntled women with whole baskets of chips on our shoulders and a bunch of grievances to make us the terror of our acquaintances, let us acquire the habit of thinking all the world better off in blessings than we are.

The Thanksgiving spirit need not, nay, should not be limited to one day once a year. Spread it over 365 days, and throw in the nights, but make Thursday, the 26th, a gala day of thankfulness when the accumulated mercies of many months will be summed up and gratefully acknowledged.

Gratitude is expensive, or should be, so the direct result of the true Thanksgiving spirit is to pass the mercies along.

From our store of blessings some scraps should be culled for those less favored. The lonely, the sick in the hospitals, those to whom Thanksgiving joys are unknown all should come in for a share of our attention, that their day may be made brighter and they, too, have a chance to reckon their causes of Thanksgiving.